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ABSTRACT

The major portion of the essay explores the psychological aspects of war within man and is followed by six different commentaries on Dr. Fromm's work. Divided into three parts, the essay first examines the nature of man to determine the goodness vs. evilness of man. Two basic personality types are identified: The necrophile, a destruction, perverted personality attraced to death: and the biophile, an optimistic personality attracted to life. It is hypothesized that the necrophile is a secondary potentiality -- a perversion occurring when the primary, life-favoring potentialities are thwarted or fail to develop. The essay examines and compares in detail characteristics of necrophilous and biophilous persons. In addition, a comparison is made between the two orientations and Freud's concept of the life instinct (Eros) and the death instinct. Society fosters the biophilic personality type when the individual is surrounded by people who love life and when security, justice, and freedom exist. The last part of the essay deals with implications of these personality theories in regard to the nuclear age where the emphasis in life in all modern industrial society is upon mechanical means, tending to promote the necrophilous attraction to death, war, and destruction. Commentaries on the essay are made by Jerome Frank, Paul Tillich, Hans Morgenthau, Roy Menninger, Pitirim Sorokin, and Thomas Merton. (SJM)

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Comments by

Jerome Frank

Roy Menninger

Hans Morgenthau

Paul Tillich

Pitirim Sorokin

Thomas Merton

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WAR WITHIN MAN

ERICH FROMM

A Psychological Enquiry into The Roots of Destructiveness

BEYOND DETERRENCE

A SERIES OF STUDIES

The present posture of nations has made more men the world over anxious about the future than ever before. But anxiety needs to give place to imaginative planning. Obsession with old theories of military power, defense or deterrence has prevented the fullest exploration of alternative policies. To replace methods which even in the past have often failed, which are out of line with the new psychological and technological situation, and which are negative rather than contributing to the general spiritual and physical welfare, many fruitful lines of thought need following. And there are many able thinkers willing to help.

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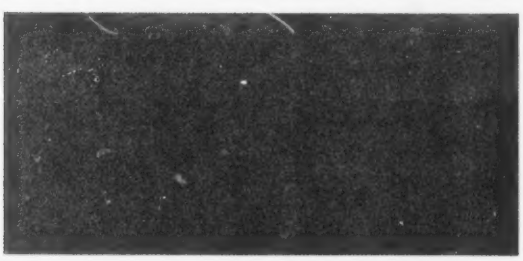
—Henry J. Cadbury



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WAR WITHIN MAN

A PSYCHOLOGICAL ENQUIRY INTO THE ROOTS OF DESTRUCTIVENESS

BY ERICH FROMM

A STUDY AND COMMENTARY IN THE BEYOND DETERRENCE SERIES

CONTENTS

page 3 Man, Sheep or Wolf
7 Necrophilia and Biophilia
24 Violence in the Nuclear Age
30 Commentaries
31 *Jerome D. Frank*
33 *Paul J. Tillich*
34 *Hans J. Morgenthau*
36 *Roy W. Menninger*
42 *Pitirim A. Sorokin*
44 *Thomas Merton*
51 Response—*Erich Fromm*

ERICH FROMM is professor of psychology at New York University and professor of psychoanalysis at the National University of Mexico in Mexico City. Prior to his specialized psychoanalytic training at the Psychoanalytic Institute in Berlin, Dr. Fromm had studied at the universities of Frankfurt and Munich, and had received his Ph.D. from the University of Heidelberg.

Throughout most of his intellectual career, Dr. Fromm has been a critical student of the theories and social philosophies of both Marx and Freud. Among his many books on social and psychological issues are: *Marx's Concept of Man; Sigmund Freud's Mission; Psychoanalysis and Religion; Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis;* and *The Art of Loving.* Dr. Fromm has been a prolific lecturer since the early 1930's when he came to America. More recently he has become one of the major commentators on the issues of world peace. Among his books on this general topic are: *The Sane Society; May Man Prevail;* and *Escape from Freedom.* His forthcoming book on the Psychological Root of War and Destructiveness deals with issues related to the topic of this essay.

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The sculpture used on the title page is by Giacomo Manzú, titled DAVID, and is from the book GIACOMO MANZU, by Anna Pacchioni, published by Edizioni del Milione, Milano, 1948.

MAN,— SHEEP OR WOLF?

THERE ARE MANY who believe that men are sheep; there are others who believe that men are wolves. Both sides can muster good arguments for their positions. Those who propose that men are sheep have only to point to the fact that men are easily influenced to do what they are told, even if it is harmful to themselves; that they have followed their leaders into wars which brought them nothing but destruction; that they have believed any kind of nonsense if it was only presented with sufficient vigor and supported by power—from the harsh threats of priests and kings to the soft voices of the hidden and not-so-hidden persuaders. It seems that the majority of men are suggestible, half-awake children, willing to surrender their will to anyone who speaks with a threatening or sweet enough voice to sway them. Indeed, he who has a conviction strong enough to withstand the opposition of the crowd is the exception rather than the rule, an exception often admired centuries later, mostly laughed at by his contemporaries.

It is on this assumption that men are sheep that the Great Inquisitors and the Dictators have built their systems. More than that, this very belief that men are sheep and hence need leaders who make the decisions for them, often gave the leaders the sincere conviction that they were fulfilling a moral duty—even though a tragic one—if they gave man what he wanted: if they were leaders who took away from him the burden of responsibility and freedom.

But if most men have been sheep, why is it that man's life is so different from that of sheep? His history has been written in

blood; it is a history of continuous violence, in which almost invariably force has been used to bend man's will. Did Talaat Pasha alone exterminate millions of Armenians? Did Hitler alone exterminate millions of Jews? Did Stalin alone exterminate millions of political enemies? These men were not alone; they had thousands of men who killed for them, tortured for them, and who did so not only willingly, but with pleasure. Do we not see man's inhumanity to man everywhere—in ruthless warfare, in murder and rape, in the ruthless exploitation of the weaker by the stronger, and in the fact that the sighs of the tortured and suffering creature have so often fallen on deaf ears and hardened hearts? All these facts have led thinkers like Hobbes to the conclusion that *homo homini lupus* (man is a wolf to his fellowman); they have led many of us today to the assumption that man is vicious and destructive by nature, that he is a killer who can be restrained from his favorite pastime only by fear of more powerful killers.

Yet the arguments of both sides leave us puzzled. It is true that we may personally know some potential or manifest killers and sadists as ruthless as Stalin and Hitler were; yet these are the exceptions rather than the rule. Should we assume that you and I and most average men are wolves in sheep's clothing, and that our "true nature" will become apparent once we rid ourselves of those inhibitions which until now have prevented us from acting like beasts? This assumption is hard to disprove, yet it is not very convincing. There are many opportunities for cruelty and sadism in everyday life in which people could indulge without fear of retaliation—yet many do not do so; in fact, many react with a certain sense of revulsion when they meet cruelty and sadism.

Is there, then, another and perhaps better explanation for the puzzling contradiction we deal with here? Should we assume that the simple answer is that there is a minority of wolves living side by side with a majority of sheep? The wolves want to kill; the sheep want to follow. Hence the wolves get the sheep to kill, to murder, and to strangle, and the sheep do so not because they enjoy it, but because they want to follow; and even then the killers have to invent stories about the nobility of their cause, about the defense against savage enemies, about revenge for bayonneted children, raped women, and violated honor, to get the majority of the sheep

to act like wolves. This answer sounds plausible, but it still leaves many doubts. Does it not imply that there are two human races, as it were—the wolves and the sheep? Furthermore, how is it that sheep can be so easily persuaded to act like wolves if it is not in their nature, even providing that violence is presented to them as a sacred duty? Our assumption of wolves and sheep may not be tenable; is it perhaps true after all that the wolves represent the essential quality of human nature, only more overtly than the majority do? The answer to this question is of crucial importance today, when nations contemplate the use of the most destructive forces for the extinction of their "enemies" and do not even seem to be deterred by the possibility that they themselves may be extinguished in the holocaust. If we are convinced that human nature is inherently prone to destroy, that the need to use force and violence is rooted in it, then our resistance to ever-increasing brutalization will become weaker and weaker. Why resist the wolves when we are all wolves—only some more so than others?

I believe that there are specific answers to these questions, and that we do not have to be satisfied with general and abstract speculations about the inherent goodness versus evilness of man. Depth psychology has offered us ample clinical material and useful hypotheses which can help us to establish the following facts: there is a special type of personality, not rare, yet not the rule, which loves destruction and death. Men who belong to this type find their most intense satisfaction when they can kill or torture; all of their energies are directed to the aim of destruction although they often do not permit themselves to be aware of the nature of this passion. This "necrophilous," death-loving orientation can be described and understood in its dynamics, its manifestations, and its genesis. Such inquiry leads us to see that destructiveness is neither *the* nature of man, nor is it contrary to his nature; that it is also not one pole of a Manichaean-Freudian dualism of good and evil. I shall try to show that the pleasure in destruction is a "secondary potentiality," a perversion which occurs necessarily when the primary, life-favoring potentialities fail to develop. There are those in whom destructiveness has become the dominant passion—they are the true killers; there are the many in whom the passion for destruction remains secondary in strength to the life-

furthering tendencies, yet is strong enough to be aroused by the killers under special circumstances. Finally there are those in whom the life-loving tendencies are so strong and dominant that no circumstances will make them join the killers. The following pages are devoted to the detailed examination of the most malignant type of destructiveness, the one rooted in the love of death: *necrophilous hostility*. There are other and more frequent sources of hostility which I shall not deal with in these pages but which I want to mention at least: 1) hostility as a response to a threat to one's life, dignity, property, etc.; this hostility may be called *reactive hostility:* it is a hostility in the defense of life; 2) destructiveness which is the compensation for a deep sense of powerlessness and impotence. It is to be found in a person who feels incapable of influencing or changing people and circumstances by reason, love, example, etc., yet who cannot tolerate the resulting feeling of impotence, and who uses *force,* and thus gives himself the illusion of strength. Force is the universal coin which is used to hide and to deny impotence. Hostility of this type may be called *compensatory hostility*.

WAR WITHIN MAN — PART TWO

NECROPHILIA AND BIOPHILIA

I WOULD not know of a better introduction to the heart of the problem we are about to discuss than a short statement made by the great Spanish philosopher Unamuno in 1936. The occasion was a speech by General Millân Astray at the University of Salamanca, whose Rector Unamuno was at the time of the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. The general's favorite motto was "Viva la Muërte!" (Long live death!) and one of his followers shouted it from the back of the hall. When the general had finished his speech Unamuno rose and said: ". . . Just now I heard a necrophilous and senseless cry: 'Long live death!' And I, who have spent my life shaping paradoxes which have aroused the uncomprehending anger of others, I must tell you, as an expert authority, that this outlandish paradox is repellent to me. General Millân Astray is a cripple. Let it be said without any slighting undertone. He is a war invalid. So was Cervantes. Unfortunately there are too many cripples in Spain just now. And soon there will be even more of them if God does not come to our aid. It pains me to think that General Millân Astray should dictate the pattern of mass psychology. A cripple who lacks the spiritual greatness of a Cervantes is wont to seek ominous relief in causing mutilation around him." At this Millân Astray was unable to restrain himself any longer. "Abajo la Inteligencia!" (Down with intelligence) he shouted. "Long live death." There was a clamor of support for this remark from the Falangists. But Unamuno went on: "This is the temple of the intellect. And I am its high priest. It

is you who profane its sacred precincts. You will win, because you have more than enough brute force. But you will not convince. For to convince you need to persuade. And in order to persuade you would need what you lack: Reason and Right in the struggle. I consider it futile to exhort you to think of Spain. I have done." [1]

Unamuno, in speaking of the necrophilous character of the cry "Long live death" touched upon the core of the problem of evil. There is no more fundamental distinction between men, psychologically and morally, than the one between those who love death and those who love life, between the *necrophilous* and the *biophilous*. This is not meant to convey that a person is necessarily either entirely necrophilous or entirely biophilous. There are, perhaps, a few who are totally devoted to death and those who are, are insane. There are not so many who are entirely devoted to life, and those who are strike us as having accomplished the highest aim man is capable of. In most of us both the biophilous and the necrophilous trends are present, but in different blends. What matters, here as always in living phenomena, is which trend is stronger, so that it determines man's behavior, not the complete absence or presence of one of the two orientations.

Necrophilia.

Literally, necrophilia means "the love of the dead," (as biophilia means the love of life). The term is customarily used to denote a sexual perversion, namely the desire to possess the dead body (of a woman) for purposes of sexual intercourse[2] or a morbid desire to be in the presence of a dead body. But, as so often, a sexual perversion presents only the more overt and clear picture of an orientation which is to be found without sexual admixture in many people. Unamuno saw this clearly when he applied the word "necrophilous" to the general's speech. He did not imply

[1] Quoted from H. Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, Harper Brothers, New York, 1961, p. 354/5. Thomas quotes Unamuno's speech from L. Portillo's translation of this speech, published in *Horizon* and reprinted in Connolly *The Golden Horizon*, 397-409. Unamuno remained under house arrest until his death a few months later.

[2] Kraft-Ebing, Hirschfeld and others have given many examples of patients obsessed with this desire.

that the general was obsessed with a sexual perversion, but that he hated life and loved death.

Strangely enough, necrophilia as a general orientation has never been described in the psychoanalytical literature, although it is related to Freud's *anal-sadistic character*, as well as to his *death instinct*. While I shall try to point to these connections later, I will now proceed to give a description of the necrophilous person.

He is one who is attracted to and fascinated by all that is dead; to corpses, to decay, to feces, to dirt. Necrophiles are the people who love to talk about sickness, about burials, about death. They come to life precisely when they can talk about death. A clear example of the pure necrophilous type was Hitler. He was fascinated by destruction, and the smell of death was sweet to him. While in the years of success it may have appeared that he wanted only to destroy those whom he considered his enemies, the days of the *Goetterdaemmerung* at the end showed that his deepest satisfaction lay in witnessing total and absolute *destruction:* that of the German people, of those around him, and of himself. A report from the First World War, while not proven, makes good sense: a soldier saw Hitler standing in a trance-like mood, gazing at a decayed corpse and unwilling to move away.

The necrophilous dwell in the past, never in the future. Their feelings are essentially sentimental, that is, they nurse the memory of feelings which they had yesterday—or believe that they had. They are cold, distant, devotees of "law and order." Their values are precisely the reverse of the values we connect with normal life: not life, but death excites and satisfies them.

Characteristic for the necrophile is his attitude toward force. Force is, to quote Simone Weil's definition, the capacity to transform a man into a corpse. Just as sexuality can create life, force can destroy it. All force is, in the last analysis, based on the power to kill. I may not kill a person but only deprive him of his freedom; I may only want to humiliate him, or take away his possessions—but whatever I do—behind all these actions stands my capacity to kill and my willingness to kill. The lover of death necessarily loves force. For him the greatest achievement of man is not to give life, but to destroy it; the use of force is not a transitory action forced upon him by circumstances—it is a way of life.

This explains why the necrophile is truly enamored of force. Just as for the lover of life the fundamental polarity in man is that between male and female, for the necrophile there exists another and very different polarity; that between those who have the power to kill and those who lack this power. For him there are only two "sexes:" the powerful ones, and the powerless ones; the killers and the killed. He is in love with the killers and hates those who are killed. Not rarely this "being in love with the killers" is to be taken literally; they are his objects of sexual attraction and phantasies, only less drastically so than in the perversion mentioned above, or in the perversion of necrophagia (the desire to eat a corpse) a desire which, incidentally, can be found not rarely in the dreams of necrophilous persons. I know a number of dreams of necrophilous persons in which they have sexual intercourse with an old woman or man by whom they are in no way physically attracted, but whom they fear and admire for their power and destructiveness. Often the person in the sexual dream is one who consciously is hated or feared.

If one wants to understand the influence of a man like Hitler or Stalin, it lies precisely in their unlimited capacity and willingness to kill. For this they are loved by the necrophiles. Of the rest, many were afraid of them, and so preferred to admire, rather than to be aware of their fear; many others did not sense the necrophilous quality of these leaders, and saw in them the builders, saviors, good fathers. If the necrophilous leaders had not pretended that they were builders and protectors, the number of people attracted to them would hardly have been sufficient to help them to seize power, and the number of those repelled by them would probably soon have led to their downfall.

Closely related to necrophilia is sadism. Sadism is different from the wish to kill inasmuch as the sadist does not want so much the physical destruction of his victim as the sensation of complete control and power over him. Through sadism a living being is transformed into a thing—not, as in killing, into a "dead" corpse—but into a "living" corpse, into a thing that has no will of its own, into the sadist's thing. In one necrophilous person the wish to kill may be dominant—in another the wish to torture—yet they are

usually both present and necessarily so, because they are rooted in the same orientation.

The principle of life is characterized by growth in a structured, functional manner. The opposite of this principle of life is all that which does not grow, that which is mechanical. The necrophilous person is driven by the desire to transform the organic into the inorganic, to approach life mechanically, as if all living persons were things. (A woman, for the necrophilous person, is essentially a machine—in dreams represented as an automobile; his approach to her is mechanical; he knows the right buttons to push, he enjoys his power to make her "race," and he remains the cold, watching observer.) All living processes, feelings and thoughts are transformed into things. Memory, rather than experience; having, rather than being, is what counts. The necrophilous person can relate to an object—a flower or a person—only if he possesses it; hence a threat to his possession is a threat to himself; if he loses possession he loses contact with the world. That is why we find the paradoxical reaction that he would rather lose life than possession, even though by losing life he who possesses has ceased to exist. He loves order and control, and in the act of making order he kills life. He is actually afraid of life, because it is disorderly and uncontrollable by its very nature. The woman who wrongly claims to be the mother of the child in the story of Solomon's judgment is typical of this tendency; she would rather have a properly divided dead child than a living one. To the necrophilous person justice means correct division, and they are willing to kill or die for the sake of what they call justice. "Law and order" for them are idols—everything that threatens law and order is felt as a satanic attack against their supreme values.

The necrophilous person is attracted to darkness and night. In mythology and poetry (as well as in dreams) he is attracted to caves, or to the depth of the ocean, or depicted as being blind. (The trolls in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* are a good example; they are blind, they live in caves, their only value is the narcissistic one of something "home-brewed" or home made.) All that is away from, or directed against life, attracts him. He wants to return to the darkness of the womb, and to the past of inorganic or animal existence. He is essentially oriented to the past, not to the future which

he hates and is afraid of. Related to this is his craving for certainty. But life is never certain, never predictable, never controllable; in order to make life controllable, it must be transformed into death; death, indeed, is the only thing that is certain in life.

The necrophilous person can often be recognized by his looks and his gestures. He is cold, his skin looks dead, and often he has an expression on his face as though he were smelling a bad odor. (This expression could be clearly seen in Hitler's face.) He is orderly, obsessive, punctual. This aspect of the necrophilous person has been demonstrated to the world in the figure of Eichmann. Eichmann was fascinated by order and death. His supreme values were obedience and the proper functioning of the organization. He transported Jews as he would have transported coal. That they were human beings was hardly within the field of his vision, hence even the problem of his having hated or not hated his victims is irrelevant. He was the perfect bureaucrat who had transformed all life into administration of things.

In this description of the necrophilous orientation I might have given the impression that *all* the features described here are necessarily to be found in the necrophilous person. It is true that such divergent features as the wish to kill, the worship of force, the attraction to death and dirt, sadism, the wish to transform the organic into the inorganic through "order," are all part of the same basic orientation. Yet as far as individuals are concerned, there are considerable differences with regard to the strength of these respective trends. Any one of the features mentioned here may be more pronounced in one person than in another; furthermore, the degree to which a person is necrophilous in comparison with his biophilous aspects, and finally the degree to which a person is aware of the necrophilous tendencies and rationalizes them varies considerably from person to person. Yet the concept of the necrophilous type is by no means an abstraction or a summary of various disparate behavior trends. Necrophilia constitutes a fundamental orientation; it is the one answer to life which is in complete opposition to life; it is the most morbid and the most dangerous among the orientations to life of which man is capable. It is the true perversion; while living, not life but death is loved; not growth, but destruction. The necrophilous person, if he dares to be aware

of what he feels, expresses the motto of his life when he says: "Long live death!" [3]

Love of Life (Biophilia)

The opposite of the necrophilous orientation is the biophilous one; its essence is love of life in contrast to love of death. Like necrophilia, biophilia is not constituted by a single trait, but represents a total orientation, an entire way of being. It is manifested in a person's bodily processes, in his emotions, in his thoughts, in his gestures; the biophilous orientation expresses itself in the whole man. The most elementary form of this orientation is expressed in the tendency of all living organisms to live. In contrast to Freud's assumption concerning the "death instinct," (which I shall discuss later on in detail), I follow the assumption made by many biologists and philosophers that it is an inherent quality of all living substance to live, to preserve its existence; as Spinoza expressed it: "Everything, insofar as it is in itself, endeavours to persist in its own being." [4] He called this endeavour of everything to persist in its own being, the very essence of the thing in question.[5]

We observe this tendency to live in all living substance around us; the grass that breaks through the stones to get light and to live; the animal that will fight to the last in order to escape death; man, who will do almost anything to preserve his life.

The tendency to preserve life and to fight against death is the most elementary form of the biophilous orientation, common to all living substance. Inasmuch as it is a tendency to *preserve* life and to *fight* death, it represents only *one* aspect of the drive toward life. The other aspect is a more positive one: living substance has the tendency to integrate and to unite; it tends to fuse with different

[3] The reader familiar with Freud's concept will certainly have noticed that my description of the necrophilous character corresponds to a large extent to Freud's picture of the "anal character." I shall not enter here into a discussion of this connection. Suffice it to say that I consider the anal character the more frequent and less malignant form of an orientation of which the necrophilous character constitutes the extreme and most malignant manifestation.

[4] Spinoza, *Ethics III*, Prop. VI.

[5] Ibid., Prop. VII.

and opposite entities, and to grow in a structural way. Unification and integrated growth are characteristic of all life processes, not only as far as cells are concerned, but also with regard to feeling and thinking.[6]

The most elementary expression of this tendency is the fusion between cells and organisms, from non-sexual cell fusion to sexual union among animals and man. In the latter, sexual union is based on the attraction between the male and female poles. The male-female polarity constitutes the core of that need for fusion on which the life of the human species depends. It seems that for this very reason nature has provided man with the most intense pleasure in the fusion of the two poles. Biologically, the result of this fusion is normally the creation of a new being. The cycle of life is that of union, growth and birth—just as the cycle of death is that of cessation of growth, disintegration, decay.

However, even the sexual instinct, while *biologically* serving life, is not necessarily one which *psychologically* expresses biophilia. It seems that there is hardly any intense emotion which can not be attracted to and blended with the sexual instinct. Vanity, the desire for wealth, for adventure, and even the attraction to death can commission, as it were, the sexual instinct into their service. Why this should be so is a matter of speculation. One is tempted to think that it is the cunning of nature to make the sexual instinct so pliable that it will be mobilized by any kind of intense desire, even by those which are in contradiction to life. But whatever the reasons, the fact of the blending between sexual desire and destructiveness can hardly be doubted. (Freud pointed to this mixture, especially in his discussion of the blending of the death instinct with the life instinct, as occurring in sadism and masochism.) Sadism, masochism, necrophagia and coprophilia are perversions, not because they deviate from the customary standards of sexual behavior, but precisely because they signify the one fundamental perversion: the blending between life and death.[7]

The full unfolding of biophilia is to be found in the productive

[6] This definition is essentially the same as that which Freud has given to the life instinct.

[7] Many rituals which deal with the separation of the clean (life) from the unclean (death) emphasize the importance of avoiding this perversion.

orientation.[8] The person who fully loves life is attracted by the process of life in all spheres. He prefers to construct, rather than to retain. He is capable of wondering, and he prefers to see something new to the security of finding the old confirmed. He loves the adventure of living more than he does certainty. His approach to life is functional rather than mechanical. He sees the whole rather than only the parts, structures rather than summations. He wants to mold and to influence by love, reason, by his example; not by force, by cutting things apart, by the bureaucratic manner of administering people as if they were things. He enjoys life and all its manifestations, rather than mere excitement.

Biophilic ethics has its own principle of good and evil. Good is all that serves life, evil is all that serves death. Good is reverence for life,[9] all that enhances life, growth, unfolding. Evil is all that stifles life, narrows it down, cuts it into pieces. Joy is virtuous and sadness is sinful. Thus it is from the standpoint of life-ethics that the Bible mentions as the central sin of the Hebrews: "Because thou didst not serve thy Lord with joy and gladness of heart in the abundance of all things" (Deut. 28:47). The conscience of the biophilous person is not one of forcing oneself to refrain from evil and to do good. It is not the Super Ego described by Freud, which is a strict taskmaster, employing sadism and the death instinct against oneself for the sake of virtue. The biophilous conscience is motivated by its attraction to life and joy; the moral effort consists in strengthening the life-loving side in oneself. For this reason the biophile does not dwell in remorse and guilt which are after all only aspects of self-loathing and sadness. He turns quickly to life and attempts to do good. Spinoza's *Ethics* is a striking example for biophilic morality. "Pleasure," he says, "in itself is not bad but good; contrariwise, pain in itself is bad."[10] And in the same spirit: "A free man thinks of death least of all things; and his wisdom is a meditation not of death but of life."[11]

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[8] Cf. the discussion of the productive orientation in *Man for Himself*, l.c.

[9] This is one of the main theses of Albert Schweitzer, one of the great representatives of the love of life—both in his writings and in his person.

[10] *Ethics*, IV, Prop. XLI.

[11] Ibid., Prop. LXVII.

The Interrelation Between the Two Orientations: Eros and Death Instinct

I have tried to give a picture of the necrophilic and the biophilic orientations in their pure forms. These pure forms are, of course, rare. The pure necrophile is insane; the pure biophile is saintly. Most people are a particular blend between the necrophilous and the biophilous orientations, and what matters is which of the two trends is dominant. Those in whom the necrophilous orientation gains dominance will slowly kill the biophilic side in themselves, usually they are not aware of their death-loving orientation; they will harden their hearts; they will act in such a way that their love of death seems to be the logical and rational response to what they experience. On the other hand those in whom love for life still dominates will be shocked when they wake up and see how close they are to the "valley of the shadow of death," and this shock might awaken them to life. Hence it is very important to understand not only how strong the necrophilic tendency is in a person, but also how aware he is of it. If he believes that he dwells in the land of life when in reality he lives in the land of death, he is lost to life since he has no chance to return.

The description of the necrophilous and biophilous orientations raises the question how these concepts are related to Freud's concept of the life instinct (Eros) and the death instinct. The similarity is quite easy to see. Freud, when he tentatively suggested the existence of the duality of these two drives within man was deeply impressed, especially under the influence of the First World War, by the force of the destructive impulses. He revised his older theory in which the sexual instinct had been opposed to the ego instincts (both serving survival, and thus the purposes of life) for the sake of the hypothesis that both the striving for life and the striving for death are inherent in the very substance of life. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud expressed the view that there was a phylogenetically older principle which he called the "repetition compulsion." The latter operates to restore a previous condition and ultimately to take organic life back to the original state of inorganic existence. "If it is true," said Freud in the *New Introductory Lectures*, "that once in an inconceivably remote past, and

in an unimaginable way, life rose out of inanimate matter, then, in accordance with our hypothesis, an instinct must have at that time come into being, whose aim it was to abolish life once more and to re-establish the inorganic state of things. If in this instinct we recognize the impulse to self-destruction of our hypotheses, then we can regard that impulse as the manifestation of a *death* instinct which can never be absent in any vital process." [12] The death instinct may be actually observed in the destructive instincts, either turned outwards against others, or inwards against ourselves, and often blended with the sexual instinct as in sadistic and masochistic perversions. Opposite to the death instinct is the life instinct. While the death instinct (sometimes called Thanatos in the psychoanalytic literature although not by Freud himself) has the function to separate and disintegrate that on which it operates, Eros has the function to bind, integrate and unite organisms among themselves and cells within the organism. Each individual's life, then, is a battlefield for these two fundamental instincts: "the effort of Eros to combine organic substances into ever larger unities" (perhaps a substitute for an instinct towards perfection which Freud does not acknowledge) and the efforts of the death instinct which tends to undo precisely what Eros is trying to accomplish. Freud himself had proposed the new theory only hesitantly and tentatively. This is not surprising since it was based on the hypothesis of the repetitious compulsion which in itself was at best an unproven speculation. In fact none of the arguments in favor of his dualistic theory seem to answer objections based on overwhelming contradictory data. Most living beings seem to fight for life with an extraordinary energy, and only exceptionally do they tend to destroy themselves. Furthermore, destructiveness varies enormously among individuals, and by no means in such a way that the variation is only one between the respective outward and the inward directed manifestations of the death instinct. We see some persons who are characterized by an especially intense passion to destroy others, while the majority do not exhibit this degree of destructiveness, yet on the other hand, they also do not exhibit any marked tendency for self-destruction, masochism, illness, etc.

[12] S. Freud. *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, W. W. Norton Co., New York, 1933.

I suggest a development of Freud's theory in the following direction: Eros and destruction, the affinity to life and the affinity to death is, indeed, the most fundamental contradiction which exists in man. This duality, however, is not one of two inherent instincts, relatively constant and always battling with each other until the final victory of the death instinct, but it is one between the primary and most fundamental tendency of life—that to persevere in life [13]—and its contradiction which comes into being when man fails to develop his life instincts. In this view the "death instinct" is a malignant phenomenon which grows and takes over to the extent to which Eros does not unfold. The death instinct represents pathology and not, as in Freud's view, part of normal biology. The life instinct thus constitutes the primary potentiality in man; the death instinct a second potentiality.[14] The primary potentiality develops if certain conditions are present just as a seed grows only if the proper conditions of moisture, temperature, etc., are given. If the proper conditions are not present, the necrophilous tendencies will emerge and dominate the person.

What are the conditions which are responsible for necrophilia? From the standpoint of Freud's theory one must expect that the strength of the life and death instincts (respectively) remains constant, and that for the death instinct there is only the alternative of its being turned outwards or inwards. Hence environmental factors can only account for the direction which the death instinct takes, either outwards or inwards. If, on the other hand, one follows the hypothesis presented here, one must ask this question: which factors make for the development of the necrophilous orientation, in general, and more specifically, for the greater or lesser intensity of the death-loving orientation in a given individual or group?

To this most important question I do not have a satisfactory answer, nor do I find in the psychoanalytic literature satisfactory

[13] Freud takes care of the objection that if the death instinct is so strong people would normally tend to commit suicide, by saying that "the organism wishes to die in its own fashion." "Hence arises the paradoxical situation that the living organism struggles most energetically against events (dangers, in fact) which might help it to attain its life's goal rapidly—by a kind of short circuit." (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, l.c. p. 51.)

[14] Cf. my analysis of destructiveness and the distinction between primary and secondary potentialities in *Man for Himself*, Ch. V, A.

answers to the question of the genesis of destructiveness, regardless of the theoretical concepts under which destructiveness is categorized. Further study of this problem is, in my opinion, of the utmost importance. Nevertheless I can venture some tentative answers which I have arrived at on the basis of my clinical experience in psychoanalytic treatment and on the basis of observation and analysis of group behavior. The most important condition for the development of the love of life in the child is for him *to be with people who love life*. Love of life is just as contagious as love of death. It communicates itself without words, explanations, and certainly without any preaching that one ought to love life. It is expressed in gestures more than in ideas, in the tone of voice more than in words. It can be observed in the whole atmosphere of a person or group, rather than in the official principles and rules according to which they organize their lives. Among the specific conditions for the development of biophilia I could mention the following: warm, affectionate contact with others during infancy; freedom and absence of threats; the possibility of making proper use of one's potentialities; stimulating influence of, and response to others; conditions of life which permit a person freedom of thought and action, and the creative use of his powers of work. The very opposite of these conditions furthers the development of necrophilia: growing up among death-loving people, lack of stimulation, fright, conditions which make life routinized and uninteresting, bureaucratic order instead of one determined by direct and human relations among people.

As to the *social* conditions for the development of biophilia, it is evident that they are the very conditions which promote the trends I have just mentioned with regard to individual development. It is possible, however, to speculate further about the social conditions, even though the following remarks are only a beginning rather than an end of such speculation.

Perhaps the most obvious factor to be mentioned here is that of a situation of *abundance* versus *scarcity,* both economically and psychologically. As long as most of man's energy is taken up by the defense of his life against attacks, or to ward off starvation, the love of life must be stunted, and necrophilia fostered. Another important social condition for the development of biophilia lies in

the abolition of *injustice*. By injustice I do not refer here to the hoarding concept of justice-injustice according to which it is considered justice if everybody has exactly the same and as injustice if this is not the case; I refer by injustice to a social situation in which one social class exploits another, and imposes conditions on it which do not permit the unfolding of a rich and dignified life; or in other words, where one social class is not permitted to share with others in the same basic experience of living; in the last analysis, by injustice I refer to a social situation in which a man is not an end in himself, and becomes the means for the ends of another man. Finally, a significant condition for the development of biophilia is *freedom*. But "freedom from" political shackles is not a sufficient condition. If love for life is to develop, there must be freedom "to;" freedom to create and to construct, to wonder and to venture. Such freedom requires that the individual is active and responsible, not a slave, nor a well-fed cog in the machine.

Summing up, love for life will develop most in a society in which there is *security* in the sense that the basic conditions for a dignified life are not threatened, *justice* in the sense that nobody can be an end for the purpose of another, and *freedom*, in the sense that each man has the possibility to be an active and responsible member of society. The last point is of particular importance. Even a society in which security and justice are present might not be conducive to the love of life, if the creative self-activity of the individual is not furthered. It is not enough that men are not slaves; if social conditions further the existence of automatons, the result will not be love of life, but love of death. More about this last point will be said in the pages dealing with the problem of necrophilia in the nuclear age, specifically in relation to the problem of a bureaucratic organization of society.

Some Objections

However, before we discuss the problem of the role of necrophilia in contemporary society, I want to take up some objections which may be directed against the whole concept of necrophilia as it has been developed so far.

Even though I pointed to the various kinds of non-necrophilous hostility in the beginning of this paper, this question might

arise. Have we not confused hostility, destructiveness, and necrophilia? Are all destructiveness and violence necrophilous, or, on the other hand, can destructiveness and violence be used in the service of life rather than in that of death?

The man who kills in order to live is determined by his impulse to live, and not because he is fascinated by death. The necrophilous person, on the other hand, is attracted to death, not because he wants to live—but precisely because death is sweet to him. Perhaps we did wolves an injustice by implying that they are the symbol for death-loving men. It seems, indeed, that only man is capable of developing the ultimate perversion: not that of destructiveness in the service of life, but of living in the service of death; that only man can turn away from life, enjoy the atmosphere of death, enjoy being a sadistic torturer of his fellowman.

Why should this be so? Is man, then, more evil than a beast of prey? Was Hobbes too charitable to man when he called him a wolf?

Indeed, we must assume that man's capacity for cruelty toward man is not paralleled in the animal kingdom. Yet it is improbable that man should have an *instinct* for cruelty which the animal does not have, nor is Freud's assumption of the death instinct convincing, especially if we consider that it would be even harder to find evidence for the death instinct in animals than it was for Freud to find such evidence in man.

Perhaps man's capacity for cruelty, for taking pleasure in *useless killing* can be better understood *precisely because he is human*. By this I mean because he is little determined by instinct, and because he has self-awareness. He is aware of himself as a separate being, of his isolation, of his death, of the dangers which threaten him. He wants to transcend his role as a creature, as an object of circumstance; he wants to make sense of his life, to be active rather than passive. But it is difficult to make sense of life, it is difficult not to be overwhelmed by the sense of powerlessness and the significance of one's own existence, it is difficult to transcend the role of a creature, cast around by uncontrollable circumstances. It seems that man, when he senses his failure to transcend his situation by creating, tries to transcend it instead by destroying. In destroying life he transcends it; in the act of destruction he

proves himself superior to that which he could not create: life. By imposing his unrestrained will on another living creature he becomes a god; he can forget the sense of his own powerlessness in the thrill of his own power. Fascination with death and torture is the reaction of the man who has failed in living; it is the expression of his envy and resentment against life; it is the envy of the cripple who would rather see life destroyed than face his own crippledness.

Some will say that violence and force in the service of life are necessary, and not evil. Others will insist that even in the case of defending life the use of violence remains evil. But even the latter will agree that to use violence in order to rob, exploit and humiliate is different from the use of violence in order to protect oneself from being robbed, exploited and humiliated.

It must be added that there is pleasure in fighting and even in killing which does not serve the defense of life, and yet which does not fall under the above mentioned categories. Examples for this are to be found in a certain developmental stage of children and in many primitive people. Without being able to enter into a full discussion of this phenomenon here I want to point to several aspects of it. First of all, among primitive people the "stranger"—and that means often the member of a neighboring tribe—is not experienced as being fully human, and thus one does not identify with him. Hence killing people is experienced as being rather similar to killing animals; it does not have the same emotional impact and meaning which killing has if there exists full identification with those killed. Furthermore, just as in hunting, other factors enter into the psychological picture; among those are especially the pride in the skill of fighting, the narcissistic satisfaction in victory, etc. We can observe this among primitive tribes today as well as among Homer's heroes. They seem to enjoy skill and victory rather than the death of the enemy. With children one can still see another motive—that of curiosity. Acts which appear as sadistic and destructive are often motivated by the desire to know an object; at a certain stage of development knowing is still achieved by taking apart rather than by loving.

There is still another problem. Even though killing may serve the aim of life, it is never good—and often it is only a fiction when

it is said that the opponent threatens life or freedom and hence killing is necessary.

Who is to decide when killing is done for freedom and when it is done for reasons of conquest or oppression? Certainly, to take recent examples, the Czar, the Kaiser, Clemenceau, and Lloyd George all ordered killing in the name of freedom; even Hitler, when ordering the indiscriminate hanging of men, women, and children as a reprisal for attacks by guerillas, justified it as an act for the protection of the Germans from being enslaved by their enemies. Furthermore, it is dangerous because any political violence today will easily end in nuclear war—and thus in the end of freedom. Any glorification of violence is not only dangerous, it is also based on an untruth. Dying is never sweet except for the necrophilous pervert, and killing never leads to the realization of what is human. Killing is always a violation of that which is human, both in the killer and in the killed. It is condoned by many as being in the service of life, but it must always be atoned for because it always is a crime against life; it always hardens the heart of the killer, it always violates his humanity.

VIOLENCE IN THE NUCLEAR AGE

WHAT ARE the implications of these theoretical considerations for our age, and especially with regard to the psychological motives for war?

I shall not be concerned here with *all* the aspects of modern war, many of which have existed for previous wars as they do for nuclear war, but only with *one* very crucial psychological problem pertaining to nuclear war. Whatever the rationale of previous wars might mave been—defense against attack, economic gain, liberation, glory, preservation of a way of life—such rationale does not hold true for nuclear war. There is no defense, no gain, no liberation, no glory, when at the very "best" half of one's country's population has been incinerated within hours, all cultural centers destroyed, and a barbaric, brutalized life remains in which those still alive will envy the dead.[15]

Why is it that in spite of all this, preparations are made for nuclear war without any more widespread protest than that which exists? How can we understand that people with children and grandchildren do not stand up and protest? Why is it that people who have much to live for, or so it would seem, are soberly considering the destruction of all? There are many answers; yet none

[15] I can not accept those theories which try to persuade us that a) the sudden destruction of 60 million Americans will not have a profound and devastating influence on our civilization and/or b) that even when nuclear war has started, such rationality will continue to exist among the enemies that they will conduct the war according to a set of rules which will prevent mass destruction.

of them gives a satisfactory explanation unless we include the following: that *people are not afraid of total destruction because they do not love life;* or even, *because many are attracted to death.*

This hypothesis seems to contradict all obvious evidence. Was there ever a culture with more love of pleasure, with more love of excitement and with greater opportunities for the majority to enjoy pleasure and excitement? But even if we admit that people never had more excitement and pleasure than today, this would not exclude the fact that there is little love of life today and perhaps a great deal of attraction to death.

In order to explain this apparent paradox I must refer to the previous analysis of the life-loving and death-loving orientations respectively. Life is structured growth, and by its very nature not subject to strict control or prediction. In the realm of life others can be influenced only by the forces of life, such as love, stimulation, example. Life can be experienced only in its individual manifestations, in the individual person as well as in a bird or a flower. There is no life of "the masses," there is no life in abstraction. But our industrial civilization is not organized for life. Our approach to life is mechanical. Our main aim is to produce things, and in the process of this idolatry of things we transform ourselves into things. People are treated as numbers. The question here is not whether they are treated nicely and are well-fed (things, too, can be treated nicely); the question is whether people are things or living beings. People love mechanical gadgets much more than living beings. The approach to men is intellectual-abstract. One is interested in people as objects, in their common properties, in the statistical rules of mass behavior, not in living individuals. All this goes together with the increasing role of bureaucratic methods. In giant centers of production, giant cities, giant countries, men are administered as if they were things; they themselves and their administrators are transformed into things, and obey the law of things. But man is not made to be a thing; he is killed when he becomes a thing; he becomes desperate and wants to kill all life.

Consider the role that killing plays in our amusements. The movies, the comic strips, the newspapers are full of excitement because they are full of reports of destruction, sadism, brutality. Millions of people live humdrum but comfortable existences—and

nothing excites them more than to see or read of killings, whether it is murder or the fatal accident in an automobile race. Is this not an indication of how deep this fascination with death has already grown? Or think of expressions such as being "thrilled to death" or "dying to" do this or that, or the expression "it kills me." Briefly intellectualization, quantification, abstractification, bureaucratization, and reefication—the very characteristics of modern industrial society are applied to people rather than to things; they are not the principles of life but those of mechanics. People living in such a system must necessarily become more distant to life and more attracted to death. They are not aware of it. They take the thrills of excitement for the joys of life and live under the illusion that they are very much alive when they only have many things to own and to use. The lack of protest against nuclear war, the capacity of our "atomologists" to discuss with gusto the balance sheet of total or half-total destruction, shows how far we have already gone into the "valley of the shadow of death."

These features of necrophilous orientation exist in all modern industrial societies, regardless of their respective political structures. What communist state-capitalism has in common in this respect with corporate capitalism is more important than the ways in which they differ. Both systems have in common the bureaucratic-mechanized approach and both are preparing for total destruction.

The affinity between the necrophilous contempt for life and the admiration of speed and all that is mechanical was expressed very distinctly and probably for the first time in Marinetti's "Manifesto of Futurism" (1909). The following excerpts will make this clear:

> *1.* We shall sing the love of danger, the habit of energy and boldness.
>
> *2.* The essential elements of our poetry shall be courage, daring and rebellion.
>
> *3.* Literature has hitherto glorified thoughtful immobility, ecstacy and sleep; we shall extol aggressive movement, feverish insomnia, the double quick step, the somersault, the box on the ear, the fisticuff.
>
> *4.* We declare that the world's splendour has been enriched by a new beauty; the beauty of speed. A racing

motor-car, its frame adorned with great pipes, like snakes with explosive breath . . . a roaring motor-car, which looks as though running on a shrapnel is more beautiful than the *Victory of Samothrace*.

5. We shall sing of the man at the steering wheel, whose ideal stem transfixes the Earth, rushing over the circuit of her orbit.

6. The poet must give himself with frenzy, with splendour and with lavishness, in order to increase the enthusiastic fervour of the primoridal elements.

7. There is no more beauty except in strife. No masterpiece without aggressiveness. Poetry must be a violent onslaught upon the unknown forces, to command them to bow before man.

8. We stand upon the extreme promontory of the centuries! . . . Why should we look behind us, when we have to break in the mysterious portals of the Impossible? Time and Space died yesterday. Already we live in the absolute, since we have already created speed, eternal and ever-present.

9. We wish to glorify war—the only health giver of the world—militarism, patriotism, the destructive arm of the Anarchist, the beautiful Ideas that kill, the contempt for woman.

10. We wish to destroy the museums, the libraries, to fight against moralism, feminism and all opportunistic and utilitarian meannesses.

11. We shall sing of the great crowds in the excitement of labour, pleasure and rebellion; of the multi-coloured and polyphonic surf of revolutions in modern capital cities; of the nocturnal vibration of arsenals and workshops beneath their violent electric moons; of the greedy stations swallowing smoking snakes; of factories suspended from the clouds by their strings of smoke; of bridges leaping like gymnasts over the diabolical cutlery of sunbathed rivers; of adventurous liners scenting the

> horizon; of broad-chested locomotives prancing on the rails, like huge steel horses bridled with long tubes; and of the gliding flight of aeroplanes, the sound of whose screw is like the flapping of flags and the applause of an enthusiastic crowd.[16]

To speak of the necrophilous quality of our industrial civilization does not imply that industrial production as such is necessarily contrary to the principles of life. The question is whether the principles of social organization and of life are subordinated to those of mechanization, or whether the principles of life are the dominant ones. Obviously, so far the industrialized world has not found an answer to the question which is posed here: how is it possible to create a humanist industrialism as against the bureaucratic mass industrialism which rules our lives today?

The danger of nuclear war is so imminent that it seems probable that man will have arrived at a new barbarism before he has even a chance to find the road to a humanist industrialism. Yet not all hope is lost; hence we might ask ourselves whether the hypothesis developed here could in any way contribute to finding peaceful solutions. I believe it might be useful in several ways. First of all, an awareness of our pathological situation, while not yet a cure, is nevertheless a first step. If more people became aware of the difference between love for life and love for death, if they became aware that they themselves are already far gone in the direction of necrophilia, this shock alone could produce new and healthy reactions. Furthermore, the sensitivity toward those who recommend death may be increased; many may see through the pious rationalizations of the death lovers and change their admiration for them into disgust. Beyond this, our hypothesis would suggest one thing to those concerned with peace and survival: that every effort must be made to weaken the attraction of death and to strengthen the attraction of life. Why not declare that there is only one truly dangerous subversion, the subversion of life? Why do not those who represent the traditions of religion and humanism speak up and say that there is no more deadlier sin than the love for death and the contempt for life? Why not encourage our

[16] Initial Manifesto of Futurism (1909), p. 124.

best brains, scientists, artists, educators, to make suggestions on how to arouse and stimulate love for life as opposed to love for gadgets? I know, love for gadgets brings profits to the corporations —love for life requires fewer things—hence is less profitable. Maybe it *is* too late. Maybe the neutron bomb which leaves whole cities intact, without life, is to be the symbol of our civilization. But, again, those of us who love life will not bow down to the principles of death before we have inhaled for the last time.[17]

Finally these considerations suggest that the apathy which is furthered by the conviction that man's evilness is a *necessary* part of his nature might be diminished by the awareness that the love for life and the love for death are *not* part of man's nature as two given and constant potentialities, but that it is the failure to make sense of life which produces the thrill in death and destruction. Indeed, love for life and love for death are not a dualism inherent in man, they rather constiute his basic *choice;* but it is a choice which he makes not when he has arrived at the act of final destruction but many steps before this last one; he makes this choice each time that he despises life and neglects it. Every act of irreverence for life, every act which neglects life, which is indifferent to and which wastes life is a step toward the love of death. This choice man must make at every minute. Never were the consequences of the wrong choice as total and as irreversible as they are today. Never was the warning of the Bible so urgent:

> "I have put before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life, that you and your children may live."
>
> Deut. 30:19

[17] I suggest an empirical program of research: 1) construct a good depth questionnaire which permits the differentiation of the necrophilic from the biophilic orientation. 2) Apply this questionnaire to a stratified sample of the United States population, and find out 3) what the percentage of both main orientations and the most important mixtures in between them are among the U. S. population. 4) Correlate the psychological orientation with political attitudes, especially those to war and peace, to find out whether the thesis presented here is corroborated by the statistical evidence. 5) Study the correlations between the necrophilic and biophilic orientations with other factors, socio-economic status, education, occupation, hobbies, religious interest, philosophy of life, etc., in order to see which factors seem to have a causal relation to the two orientations, respectively. 6) Form pilot groups and study which conditions and changes lead to a change in orientation.

COMMENTARIES

WITH EACH of the previous studies in the *Beyond Deterrence* series, a seminar has been held in which experts representing varying points of view discussed at length and in direct personal exchange the issues raised in the central essay. For several technical reasons and partially in a spirit of experimentation, the commentary which follows was conducted by inviting each commentator to express his views on Dr. Fromm's essay in writing. This format has the advantage of providing an opportunity for more carefully reasoned statements and a coherence of comment from each participant. On the other hand, the quality of personal exchange and sharing of thoughts among the commentators has been lost.

The statements by each of the commentators are printed without editorial change, as is the answer to these comments by Dr. Fromm. The working title of the essay in manuscript form about which the commentators wrote their statements was "On the Psychological Causes of War." This title has been changed and certain other minor changes plus a few minor additions to the essay have been made by the author subsequent to the reading by the commentators. However, these changes have not substantially modified the content, the point of view or the emphasis of the original essay.

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BY
JEROME D. FRANK
ROY W. MENNINGER
HANS J. MORGENTHAU
PAUL J. TILLICH
PITIRIM A. SOROKIN
THOMAS MERTON

COMMENT ON
WAR WITHIN MAN

JEROME D. FRANK

Doctor Jerome Frank, psychiatrist, educator; professor of psychiatry and acting psychiatrist-in-chief, Henry Phipps Psychiatric Clinic, Johns Hopkins University.

DR. FROMM has written a powerful sermon on good and evil. Its effectiveness is enhanced by his vocabulary and conceptual scheme, which make more sense to modern man than terms such as sin and salvation. His forceful reminder of the strength and pervasiveness of fascination with death and blood lust is a welcome and needed corrective to the popular shallow optimism that views humans as essentially altruistic and affiliative, encouraging the false hope that removal of economic and other frustrations (which are assumed to be the major cause of human destructiveness) would automatically lead to peace.

The discussion of senseless killing as an effort by man to overcome his sense of powerlessness, and the distinction between "reactive" and "compensatory" hostility on the one hand and "necrophilic" hostility on the other are especially illuminating.

How much Dr. Fromm's portrayal corresponds to the actual state of affairs is perhaps an irrelevant question, since this paper is, after all, an attempt to persuade rather than a scientific document. However, to promote discussion it may be well to mention a few reservations, which are made very tentatively because I am not nearly as well informed as Dr. Fromm about history, economics and politics.

First, the delineation of necrophilic and biophilic personality types is essentially a literary exercise, with an honorable lineage tracing back at least to Theophrastus. The skill of the writer makes them convincing, but they are, after all, abstractions, and it would take a lot of research to test their validity.

Many would question the assumption that modern industrial society promotes necrophilia. How do we know that necrophilia was not as prominent an aspect of pre-industrial societies? Certainly, bouts of senseless killing and wars of extermination have erupted periodically since the dawn of history.

In fact, one could turn the argument around and assert that no people on earth have been as sensitive to the welfare of others, as respectful of their individuality, and as considerate in their personal relationships as Americans today, and this has made us more aware of the dehumanizing forces that have always been present. Perhaps our fascination with violence and our willingness to commit genocide on distant groups may be intensified by the suppression of hostile impulses in our own relationships.

Furthermore, the emphasis on violence may be primarily another manifestation of the search for emotional arousal in our culture, also seen in the barrage of sexual stimuli and rising rates of delinquency, alcoholism and addiction. The hunger for excitement may be just as basic a human propensity as necrophilia and the source of just as much mischief when life becomes so comfortable that it is boring. Under less favorable living conditions, the need for stimulation (which may be present in all living organisms, not just humans) is abundantly satisfied by the ordinary vicissitudes of life. We have to create our thrills artificially.

Some of these questions might be clarified by the suggestion for a research program described in the footnote on page twenty-nine. Such a survey, preferably conducted in several countries, would be of great practical as well as theoretical value.

Dr. Fromm's analysis may not give sufficient weight to the great power of group standards in influencing the individual's choice towards necrophilic or biophilic behavior. As far as their own natures go, I believe that most of the SS men who publicly burned little children alive, and the Hindus who abjured violence in the face of death would be interchangeable. (Indeed, some of the same Hindus who followed Gandhi participated in the Hindu-Moslem violence following partition.) If this speculation is valid, then, in addition to strengthening biophilic and weakening necrophilic trends by the means Dr. Fromm suggests, a more practical approach may be to try to strengthen group standards that oppose

war and foster resort to non-destructive measures for resolution of international conflict. This can be done (and is being done) through mass media, and efforts to influence political leaders and other standard-setters directly.

COMMENT ON WAR WITHIN MAN

PAUL J. TILLICH

Professor Paul J. Tillich, theologian and author; the visiting John Nuveen Professor of Theology, University of Chicago.

MY BASIC CRITICISM of the paper of Dr. Fromm is directed against the title! It says: "The Psychological Causes of War." [1] The war is caused by the encounter of power structures, the bearers of history and its dynamics. These conflicts are unavoidable as long as there is no overarching unity within which the particular power structures have found a common center. Whether this is an inner historical possibility is an open question. A nuclear war contradicts the meaning of war, since it cannot create a large unity, but destroys the bearers of centered historical action. Therefore it is quite imaginable that by a silent or open agreement, all involved will abstain from using it, even if a war situation is given. And it is a clear ethical demand that nobody should start such a war, which is not a war, but a *mere* catastrophe. These assertions about the cause of war and the nature of atomic war are implicitly a rejection of the attempt to explain war by a particular psychopathological perversion, even if this perversion is interpreted as an extreme expression of a universally human tendency. There are certainly suicidal and sadistic tendencies in men's estranged nature (Dr. Fromm rightly denies that they belong to men's essential nature) and such tendencies can use the war situation in order to be actualised. But it is a confusion of cause and occasion if they are made responsible for the outbreak of war.

[1] This title was since changed.

COMMENT ON
WAR WITHIN MAN

HANS J. MORGENTHAU

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WHEN FRANCIS I of France was asked why he always made war against Charles V of Austria, he is reported to have answered: "Because we both want the same thing: Italy." I submit that this statement points to a more adequate understanding of international conflict and war than Dr. Fromm's psychological analysis. I shall not raise here the issue of the intrinsic plausibility and soundness of Dr. Fromm's psychological arguments and limit myself to saying that I have grave doubts about them. They appear to me to amount to a kind of psychological metaphysics rather than an empirically founded scientific analysis. Yet even if Dr. Fromm's psychological arguments were as plausible and sound as one might wish, they would still be invalidated as an explanation of international conflict and war because they reduce an autonomous sphere of human action to a mere effect of psychological causation. In other words, my methodological position differs radically from Dr. Fromm's. He approaches the political world with the perspective and the method of "psychologism," while I try to understand political phenomena as such, endowed with autonomous objective meaning regardless of their psychological origin.

"Psychologism" tried in the 18th and 19th centuries to explain the principles of ethics and logic in terms of their psychological origins. Later on, especially under the impact of the work of Freud, all spheres of human thought and action, until then believed to be endowed with independent objective meanings, were subjected to a causative treatment. I remember vividly the attempts at explaining,

for instance, the art of Leonardo da Vinci in terms of the author's homosexuality and Goethe's love poetry in terms of the author's early masturbation!

What all "psychologisms" have in common is the confusion between causation and valuation, between origin and meaning. This confusion precludes the understanding of any phenomena as such; for the phenomena, say, of art, literature, politics, and religion are seen as the mere epiphenomena of certain psychological causes. Political phenomena, in particular, have an objective meaning which is independent of the psychological causes assigned to them. For two centuries, the rulers of Russia, regardless of their individual psychological qualities, have had a vital interest in the domination of Poland, and the rulers of other nations have from time to time contested that domination. That contest could have taken, and actually did take, the form of war if a contesting ruler felt both strongly and strong enough to challenge the Russian domination of Poland by force of arms. Or in the absence of such feelings the conflicting interests were peacefully accommodated either through the division of the object of the conflict or through compensations elsewhere.

The statesman has the never-ending task to seek the accommodation of apparently irreconcilable interests by redefining and compromising them. There is no other way of preserving peace in a world of sovereign nations. If this way has become too risky in view of the availability of nuclear weapons then the rules of the game itself must be changed and the multinational world be transformed into a world state. I can see nothing "psychologism" contributes to either of these tasks. By diverting attention from the real issues of politics and by draining the political phenomena of independent objective meaning, "psychologism" actually stands in the way of sound thought and action in matters political.

COMMENT ON
WAR WITHIN MAN

ROY W. MENNINGER

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DOCTOR FROMM has made a considerable effort to relate the psychological nature of man to the social phenomenon of war. He has moved through the familiar channel which begins with man's aggressiveness, but has distinguished his contribution from the more traditional views of personality by a new dichotomy. His characterizations of a "death-loving" and "life-loving" orientation have a superficial resemblance to the familiar psychoanalytic notions of aggressive and erotic instincts. But one wonders at first why it is necessary to introduce new terminology for old phenomena. Doctor Fromm appears to have gone beyond hypothesizing the presence of certain drives he thus relabels to the elaborate characterization of personality types whose orientation is directed towards death on the one hand, and life on the other.

Nominally an objective and thoughtful view by a student of the human personality, Doctor Fromm's descriptions tread dangerously close to a theological moralism. His way out of the wolf-sheep dilemma, presumably by suggesting some kind of synthesis of the two, seems only to heighten the dilemma even more. His effort to characterize the typical personalities in such stark and extreme terms leads one to the uncomfortable conclusion that there are in fact two species of people: the good and the bad, those for life and those against. If one is to conclude that the object of living is to expunge those "alien" wishes for death, as Doctor Fromm suggests, there is little to distinguish this "modern" view from the medieval concept of converting the diseased or the deviant by exorcising the devil that lies within.

Doctor Fromm's dichotomy departs from traditional psychoanalytic thought by suggesting that the death instinct—his "death-loving" drive—is exclusively negative, murderous and destructive. In a like manner, its opposite is conceived as being equally pure. This picture hardly conforms to the complex patterns of human behavior which confront the clinician. We are accustomed to seeing human aggressivity manifest itself in a virtual spectrum of behaviors; self-assertiveness, ambitious promotion-seeking, passive-aggressive resistance, overt violence, and unprovoked murder, for example. Though all these are reflections of what may be called the aggressive drive, they range widely from extremes of personal and social effectiveness, to the worst sort of destructive urges which Doctor Fromm describes. One may similarly outline a range of attitudes and behaviors which reflect the erotic drive, from extremes of destructiveness to those idealized heights of life-loving of which Doctor Fromm speaks. Altruistic self-sacrifice, generous tolerant acceptance, greedy material acquisition, narcissistic self-aggrandizement, and euthanasia of a dearly beloved but suffering spouse are examples of the variability of drive expression.

Examination of each of these modes of behavior would suggest that they are composed of mixtures of both the aggressive and the erotic drives towards need-fulfillment, modified by mechanisms of the personality in conformity with countervailing pressures from its own conscience and from the environment.

It seems to me that any view of the nature of man which hopes to reflect the way he is rather than the way we wish him to be must account for this great interwoven complexity of the aggressive and erotic drives. Most behaviors are influenced in their goal, their intent, their need-fulfilling efficiency, and their object of attention by *both* drives, and rarely by one or the other alone. The proportions of the "mix" can of course vary from individual to individual, but also from time to time and circumstance to circumstance within the same person. Ruthless behavior of the executive and his efforts to keep his company alive and competitive may be psychologically akin to his vigorous and successful game of squash. To insist that his aggressive behavior, in the office or on the squash court, is therefore a sign of a wish for or an interest in death, and therefore "bad," is to reduce the complexities of a dynamic process to an

inadequate and oversimplified formula. It is unquestionably useful to consider that many subtly destructive behaviors are an expression of a "death instinct." Such clinical examples as the diabetic who refuses to take insulin, the chronic alcoholic who "drinks himself to death," the poly-surgical patient or the severely accident-prone individual, may all be cases in point. But the labeling of the great range of manifestations of aggressivity—presumably all arising from the same instinctual origins, but many of which are constructive rather than destructive—deprives us of discriminating nuances by lumping them all in the same pot.

Apart from the inapplicability to clinically recognized phenomena which such a simplification produces, I was struck by the presumptions which this view makes about death itself. The implication emerges that since destruction leads to death, destruction is therefore equivalent to death. Destruction is something we have witnessed but no one has experienced death and returned to describe it. It is quite possible that this identity is not accurate. There are those, for example, who consider death to be the natural and appropriate outcome to a busy and rewarding life; for others, death may be a surcease from pain and a longed-for rest. The analogies of death and sleep do not pass unnoticed. To presume simply that death equals badness is to create an ethic which confuses and distracts a logical inquiry. It is not to talk about reality, since it is a reality about which we know nothing.

This opposition of life with death leaves no room for the consideration of the role of anxiety. It fails to consider that anxiety itself, mobilized by real or perceived threat, can lead to all manner of destructive outcomes which are simply motivated by an urge to defend, no matter how benighted that urge may be. To declare anxiety, therefore, "death-loving" would be to ignore its powerfully constructive effects. It is a frequently observed fact that a major difference between a constructive and destructive outcome may be a quantitative one: too much anxiety may paralyze, or lead to impetuous action and hence to damage or even destruction. Only a little less anxiety may however mobilize appropriate corrective action with a constructive outcome. It is not clear how this subtle, variable and highly responsive phenomenon can be easily dichotomized as "death-loving" or "life-loving."

Doctor Fromm presses us to accept a "two species of man" view of mankind with his declaration that the generally acknowledged "solution" of synthesis of these polar drives is the "fundamental perversion." This rejection of the synthetic solution requires that we sue for psychic divorce, rudely disassociating from within the very forces which have so powerfully stimulated so much of human endeavor which is creative. There are many who believe that the magnificent creations of art, literature, and philosophy, to mention just a few, are the result of the Hegelian synthesis of intrapsychic conflict. On a more pedestrian plane, one may cite the response to one's own unacceptable impulses by developing its opposite: the industrial magnate turned philanthropist, the messy child who becomes orderly and careful, and so on. There is much to be said for the creative role of conflict, both within the personality and within the society.

To live in a psychic world where all is "good and pure," where struggle and conflict is absent, predisposes to a kind of lotus-eating indolence and an indifference to everything else. The dangers of satiety are fully as great as those of deprivation. Struggle is life and life is an incessant sequence of struggles.

This struggle to meld contradictory pressures is in fact considered lost when the individual resorts to a total embrace of one pressure and a total denial of the other. Impulsive people, egocentric, infantile people, ascetic and schizoid people all represent failures in various degree of this vital synthetic process. Resolution of this struggle amounts to more than drawing moralistic definitions of the "good" and urging their adoption.

Beyond this, to contrast the affects of man so sharply faces us immediately with violent contradictions whose resolution can only be semantic if these polarities are all we are allowed. One cannot obviously die for one's country, because this, according to Doctor Fromm, is love of death rather than love of country. One cannot die for the defense of one's family, because this is the love of death, not a wish to preserve one's family. One can no longer hold the notion that to give one's most treasured possession for a cause or a belief is honorable; to be so wasteful of life is to be death-loving, and by Doctor Fromm's ethic, bad, no matter how vaunted or grand the abstraction which motivated it. To reduce the ethics

of human response to such a simple paradigm does violence to our views of ethics itself, quite apart from its failure to objectify the forces within the human personality.

Lastly, I am troubled by the notion, as Doctor Fromm seems to imply, that "preparations for nuclear war" are merely an expression of attraction to death. It is possible for example that the fear of being weak or of being over-run may stimulate a belief that these dangers could somehow be avoided by strength. At a national level, this belief is translated into armies, and weapons of all kinds, including the ultimate nuclear weapons. To characterize this understandable concern for safety and self-preservation as "death-loving" because, if extended to its contemporaneous extreme, it could lead to death, is to confuse the means with the end. To judge a process by its outcome is surely one method of describing it, but it does not seem to be an adequate way of characterizing the wellsprings of fear which may give rise to it.

The paradox is even greater, since most of those who genuinely support the very elements of our national nuclear war-making capacity which could lead to their own destruction are also genuinely desirous of avoiding nuclear catastrophe. This paradox of serving life by relying upon weapons of death is a psychological question which sorely needs to be better understood. Its explication is needed if we are to propose reasonable alternatives that people can not only see, but also accept. The psychological dilemma of reacting to threat by mounting counter-threat, even at the cost of one's life, is not an easy one to resolve, and it leaves me dissatisfied to resolve it by a semantic description of this behavior as an example of "death-loving." I would suspect that we must descend to more complex levels of abstraction within the human psyche if we are to see to the bottom of this perplexing and potentially annihilating paradox.

Though I find much in Doctor Fromm's psychology and ethics with which to disagree, I strongly concur that the psychology of previous wars no longer applies when one turns to a discussion of thermonuclear war. It is a fact that most people have failed to grasp the enormous magnitude of difference from "old-style" to "new-style" war. This phenomenon, often characterized as "denial," may be more complicated than that. The development of attitudes

appropriate to a phenomenon are dependent upon some experience with it. There are few of us, indeed, and perhaps none, who have a realistic conception of "megaton" in spite of our verbal facility about it. Although our critical times demand that we press our understanding of the forces which threaten us, it may exceed human limits to expect most people rapidly to develop new conceptions about phenomena they have never experienced and can scarcely imagine. There are times when mere cognitive comprehension is inadequate to the task. One may well ask here how "emotional learning" can be acquired about a thing so terrible as thermonuclear war, without having to suffer the experience of it. There is here an inherent problem in providing people with enough awareness of the dimensions of this reality in vital, emotional terms that will enable them to think seriously of alternative solutions to those now predominating.

It would seem to me that the eventual capacity to recognize the potential destructiveness that can come from the reliance upon "nuclear defense" can arise only when people discover that strength means other things than the capacity to destroy. In the immediate lives of most of us, "strength of character" is recognized as being stronger than the gun carried by the fearful and insecure adolescent. By what means such concepts as "strength of character" can be translated into national terms and then suffused into national behavior is a question for which I have no answer. But it seems apparent that the failure to find a lasting belief in sources of strength other than weapons alone can lead only to the devastating outcome that all of us consider so possible.

COMMENT ON
WAR WITHIN MAN

PITIRIM A. SOROKIN

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JUST NOW I do not have time for a serious discussion of E. Fromm's paper. In brief, I am in agreement with his position in regard to the threatening explosion of a new World War but I have a serious doubt in regard to his variation (much better one) of the Freudian theory of death-instinct. Neither the necrophilic nor biophilic "instincts" can really account for why some persons become killers while others sacrifice their lives to save the life of a fellow man. Nor why the rate of the grave forms of murder: of matricide, patricide, uxorcide, etc. of all the kings and absolute rulers of England, France, Russia, Germany, Turkey, Japan, Italy, Ancient Roman Empire and so on is from twenty to fifty times higher than the rate of the ruled population. (See the actual figures in my *Power and Morality*.) Shall this be explained by the theory that the necrophilic instinct is so many times stronger and more frequent among the kings and rulers than among the ordinary population?

Likewise, the Freud-Fromm theory does not account at all for why the curves of movement of wars and revolutions and their casualties greatly fluctuate from period to period in the history of Greece, Rome, and each of the Western countries. (See the movement of wars and internal revolutions and their casualties in Greco-Roman and the Western history from 600 B.C. to the present time in my *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, vol. III.) This theory likewise does not explain at all why the twentieth century happened to be the most murderous and bloodiest century out of all the

preceding twenty-five centuries of Greco-Roman and Western history—measured by the absolute and proportionate number (per 1,000,000 of respective populations) killed in wars, revolutions, riots, individual crimes of this century.

"Instincts" are supposed to be constant and not liable to vary greatly. As such, they cannot and do not explain at all an enormous fluctuation of mass and individual murders of man by man in various social groups and in the life history of the same society at various periods of its history. Similarly they do not satisfactorily account for why some individuals are becoming murderers and necrophiliacs while an overwhelming majority of human beings remain free from such crimes.

These remarks mean that Freud-Fromm's theory is quite inadequate for these explanations. Causation of wars, civil wars, and enormous contrasts in the rate of killing of human beings in different groups and periods is much more complex and less well known than the Freud-Fromm hypothesis suggests.

Some of the factors of making human beings more loving and less sociocultural-murderous, indicated by Fromm, are more sound and correct; but his outline of these factors is too general and vague and incomplete. At the present time, I believe, we possess a more adequate knowledge of these factors than are sketched by Fromm. (See my *The Ways and Power of Love.*)

Finally, the typological portraits of the necrophiliacs and biophiliacs, drawn by Fromm, need also serious corrections. For instance, many ascetic saints (Occidental and Oriental) would fall into Fromm's "necrophiliacs" (especially such persons as St. Francis of Assisi); meanwhile, factually, most of them were the sublime apostles of love, and of "the reverence for life." According to Fromm's typology, almost all Buddhists beginning with Gautama Buddha and most of the Buddhists of the first five centuries of Buddhism, have to be put rather into the class of the necrophiliacs; meanwhile, they have had so great a reverence for life that they refused to kill even poisonous snakes.

These brief remarks can possibly explain why Freud-Fromm's theory of psychological causes of war appears to me doubtful and inadequate in its scientific validity.

COMMENT ON
WAR WITHIN MAN

THOMAS MERTON

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IN MAKING my contribution to this discussion which appears to me both urgent and intelligent, I shall have to resort to metaphorical language because I want, in a few lines, to point towards dimensions that transcend psychology. I fully agree with Erich Fromm's analysis, but I would like to try to carry it further, in my own field.

The Christian concept of man, a concept which is held in common by all the religions which can be called "higher" or "mystical," is one which sees man as a spiritual, or self transcending being. That is to say that man, unlike other animals, does not find his fulfillment or self realization merely on the level of his own nature. Even the most satisfactory exercise of those biological functions which preserve and propagate the life of the species is not enough to fulfill man's inner capacities, even when this exercise is also psychologically mature and rewarding. As long as man acts *only* as a member of the human species, within his limits as an individual subservient to the inescapable finalities of his common "nature," he is still subject to the deepest and most radical form of spiritual alienation. He is not fully "free" because he is not able to transcend his specific individuality and function on the level of a spiritual *person* with all the perfection and autonomy implied by that concept.

In other words, it seems to me that we must remember the need to explore the full spiritual depths of such concepts as "life" and "love of life," "freedom" and so on. This will necessarily imply

at the same time a deepening and in some way an apparent complicating of the notion of man's alienation. I fully accept Fromm's analysis of alienation as it is hinted at here and developed more fully in his other books. But I think the concept needs a great deal of further exploration, beyond the limits of sociology and psychology, even of depth psychology.

I think it has too often been forgotten that there are *two* aspects of that vast, mysterious area of our being which we call the unconscious. There is the psychosomatic area which is so to speak rooted in man's biological substratum, but there is an infinitely more spiritual and metaphysical substratum in man's being, which the Rhenish mystics called the "ground" or "base" of the soul, and which the Zen Masters continually point to, but which they refuse to describe except by incomprehensible and paradoxical terms like "your original face before you were born." So, to put my point briefly, I would like to suggest the overwhelming and almost totally neglected importance of exploring this spiritual unconscious of man. There is no real love of life unless it is oriented to the discovery of one's true, spiritual self, beyond and above the level of mere empirical individuality, with its superficial enjoyments and fears.

In fact, I would like to suggest what would seem to me to be perhaps the most fruitful avenue of approach, at least for one in my own field: namely, the clear recognition of the ambiguities and ambivalences generated by false personalism. I refer to the fateful error of reducing the "person" or "spirit" to the individual and empirical ego, the "self-as-object," the self which we observe as it goes about its biological business, the machine which we regulate and tune up and feed with all kinds of stimulants and sedatives, constantly trying to make it run more and more smoothly, to fit the patterns prescribed by the salesman of pleasure-giving and anxiety-allaying commodities.

A medieval writer of great finesse, Guigo the Carthusian, points out the state of idolatry and alienation of a man who is in all things "subject to what he himself destroys"—that is to the pleasures and gratifications which the transient and exterior self takes in evanescent things. One might say that this leads us to the crux of the problem: the hope of finding life and joy in the mere

processes of natural existence leads to the contradiction which tries to *construct* and *create* in acts which have at least an implictly destructive character. The self-affirmation that springs from "using up" something or someone else in the favor of one's own pitiable transiency, leads eventually to the outright destruction of others in open despair at our own evanescence.

So Guigo says: "He who loves nothing destructible has no place in himself where he can be wounded by the man of power and he becomes inviolable, since he loves inviolable values as they ought to be loved." One might add that such a one has no need and no incentive to defend himself violently or to destroy. He does not despise or hate evanescent things. He simply hears them as "syllables which God utters at their proper time" and passes on.

When our empirical ego is taken, without further qualification, as the true "person," the true "self," as the being who is the genuine subject of life, freedom, joy, and fulfillment, or indeed of religious salvation, then we arrive at the most tragic frustrations and errors, because this implies a radical alienation of our true being. While recognizing the great importance of depth psychology (we cannot get along without it today!) I would like to say—and I am sure all analysts worthy of their salt will agree—that considerable mystification is involved in the complacent and beatific sort of counselling that aims only to remove "guilt feelings" and adjust the empirical self to a society of which Fromm has, here and elsewhere, questioned the basic sanity. We *ought* to feel guilty and we *ought* to experience anguish in the fabulous irresponsibilities and panics we are generating every week of the Cold War. The trouble is rather our moral obtuseness and our spiritual insensibility to fundamental human values.

It would seem that we ought to pay a great deal more attention than we do to the traditional spiritual and contemplative wisdoms which prescribe disciplines (in the deepest sense of "discipleships") to help man transcend his empirical self and find his "true self" in an emptiness that is completely "awake" because completely free of useless reflection. This is a realm of paradox and risk, because there are false and unsatisfactory spiritualities which do not go far enough, which indulge in Platonic oversimplifications, which objectify that which can only be grasped as subject, and

even then is lost as soon as it is "grasped." Some spiritualities generate divisive contempts which flower in destructiveness. In other words there is great danger in facile and thoughtless verbalizations of spiritual reality. All true spiritual disciplines recognize the peril of idolatry in the irresponsible fabrication of pseudo-spiritual concepts which serve only to delude man and to subject him once again to a deeper captivity just when he seems on the point of tasting the true bliss and the perfect poverty of liberation. The supreme risk in this quest for liberation resides in the paradox of transcendence itself. For the Transcendent is also at the same time Immanent, and the mystery is that while man's spiritual liberation consists in a self renunciation and self recovery "beyond himself," it is also at the same time a fantastic awakening to the truth and transcendent value of one's *ordinary self*. I know that this apparent contradiction is thoroughly outrageous and I have perhaps no real excuse for introducing it in so short a piece of writing, except that even the longest and most complex explanation would not serve to clear it up. All I can say is that for those who are interested, there are documents of all kinds which say that the highest and most "biophilic" expression of man's extraordinary capacities is precisely in this "ecstasis" in which the person is at once totally empty (of separateness and material individuation) and totally full, realizing himself in unity not only with all being(s) but with the very source and finality of Being. It is the paradox of D. T. Suzuki's formula that zero equals infinity, or the *todo y nada* of St. John of the Cross. Hence I want to say that the highest form of life is this "spiritual life" in which the infinitely "fontal" (source-like) creativity of our being in Being is somehow attained, and becomes in its turn a source of action and creativity in the world around us. The common jargon of religions tends to speak of this sometimes as "contemplation," sometimes as "liberation," sometimes as "salvation," sometimes as "divinization." The words are not indifferent, because they do have definite implications, some of which can easily be unfortunate.

Now I think the point is this: where Fromm speaks of *abundance* as against *scarcity*, saying abundance is a possible support for a biophilic orientation, I think there are unresolved ambiguities left lying around, and they have explosive possibilities. I agree by

all means that it is necessary to make wise use of all the techniques which man now has at his disposal to eliminate want, misery and injustice from the face of the earth. But our conquest of matter is illusory if it is at the same time only a more radical and more total subjection of ourselves to matter. When we had to struggle *against* a hostile nature, the challenge enabled us to preserve intact a life-giving and central integrity. Now that matter has yielded to us, we have also yielded ourselves to it so that we no longer expect life and joy from our own spiritual "center" but from things which are outside us and alien to us. I think we have to recognize the hollowness (Fromm himself certainly does) of the kind of material and depersonalized abundance which we presently enjoy in the United States. Not only does this tend to stifle and corrupt the real spiritual depths of man's being, not only does it imprison him in every possible kind of spiritual delusion, but I think the very frustrations and self contradictions of materialistic affluence, coupled with frantic and useless activism, do much to explain the death-wish of our warfare, economy and culture.

We live in a society that tries to keep us dazzled with baubles, in a bright cloud of lively and joy-loving slogans. Yet nothing is more empty and more dead, nothing is more insultingly insincere and destructive than the vapid grins on the billboards and the moron beatitude in the magazines which assure us that we are all in bliss right now. I know of course that we are fools, but I do not think any of us are fools enough to believe that we are now in heaven, even though the Russians are breaking their necks in order to become as rich as we are. I think the constant realization that we are exhausting our vital spiritual energy in a waste of shame, the inescapable disgust at the idolatrous mendacity of our commercial milieu (or the various other apocalyptic whoredoms that abound elsewhere on the face of the earth) is one of the main sources of our universal desperation. Other writers have analyzed this with great finesse, and indeed since the phenomenon is more subtle and more sophisticated in Europe than in America, I can only refer to those who have done such a good job on it over there. Gabriel Marcel is, I think, a case in point. Better still, perhaps, the less well known and more explosive Leon Bloy, who saw the whole thing with a devastatingly prophetic clarity some fifty years ago.

I might doubtless be expected to conclude with gestures of congratulation in the direction of popular religion. I am afraid this is impossible. Popular religion has to a great extent betrayed man's inner spirit and turned him over, like Samson, with his hair cut off and his eyes dug out, to turn the mill of a self frustrating and self destroying culture. The cliches of popular religion have in many cases become every bit as hollow and as false as those of soap salesmen, and far more dangerously deceptive because one cannot so easily verify the claims made about the product. The sin of religiosity is that it has turned God, peace, happiness, salvation and all that man desires into products to be marketed in a speciously attractive package deal. In this, I think, the fault lies not with the sincerity of preachers and religious writers, but with the worn out presuppositions with which they are content to operate. The religious mind today is seldom pertinently or prophetically critical. We enjoy our routine and parochial indignations, but I wonder if we have not settled down too comfortably to accept the greater prevarications that the Gospels or the Prophets would have us reject with all the strength of our being. I am afraid the common combination of organizational jollity, moral legalism and nuclear crusading will not pass muster as serious religion. It certainly has little to do with "spiritual life." Needless to say, this is more generally understood by churchmen than those who resent religious institutions are perhaps likely to realize. There is no question that Pope John XXIII, in his efforts to foster a general spiritual renewal of the Catholic Church by the Second Vatican Council, has been aware of where the trouble lay. But even then, I think that the most profoundly and properly *spiritual* issues still lie too deep for common observation and interest, and are certainly far too mysterious to be captured in the concise and technical terminology of an ecumenical council.

Still I would like to conclude on a note of hope. It is precisely because I believe, with Abraham Heschel and a cloud of witnesses before him, that "man is not alone," that I find hope even in this most desperate situation. Man does not have to transcend himself in the sense of pulling himself up by his own bootstraps. He has, rather, to respond to the mysterious grace of a Spirit which is at once infinitely greater than his own and yet which, at

the same time, offers itself as the total plenitude of all Gifts, to be in all reality his "own spirit."

Returning to Guigo the Carthusian: our response to the Spirit of life is itself a living and dynamic progress, a continual attunement to all the "syllables of the great song." Our violence and destructiveness come from the fact that we cling madly to a single syllable, and thus wish the whole song to stop dead while we enjoy what we imagine is final and absolute. But the "most wise Singer" is not singing for ourselves alone and we must accept the fact that some of His notes and words are for others and seemingly "against us." We must not react destructively against the notes we do not like. We must learn to respond not to this or that syllable, but to the *whole song.*

However, the response is not automatic. It demands a great purity of devotion to trust and to life. The delusions of a fat society glutted with the profits begotten by its own death wish, hardly dispose us to respond to the *Creator Spiritus,* the *Cantor sapientissimus,* without a fundamental reorientation of our thought and life. All have the duty to contribute whatever they can to this reorientation. I do not think the word reorientation is strong enough. What is required is a spiritual upheaval such as we seldom see recorded in history. But such things have happened, and let us hope we have not gone so far that they will not happen again.

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS ON WAR WITHIN MAN

ERICH FROMM

THE CRITICISMS of this paper concern mainly two points. The first one, expressed by Hans J. Morgenthau and Paul Tillich, is that wars are not to be understood psychologically, but as political phenomena as such, "endowed with autonomous objective meaning regardless of their psychological origin." Morgenthau argues against "psychologism" trying as a method to understand political phenomena. Paul Tillich similarly says that "war is caused by the encounter of power structures, the bearers of history and its dynamics."

I am in full agreement with both commentators in their criticizing the fallacy of "psychologism" in the understanding of social and political phenomena and in their plea for the study and understanding of the social, economic and political facts which lead to certain political results. I wondered why both Morgenthau and Tillich understood me to take a position which is opposite to mine and in fact quite close to theirs. One reason for this misunderstanding might lie in the original title. Had it been "On The Causes of War," the assumption that I want to explain war by psychology would be quite justified. But the original title was "On the *Psychological* Causes of War," by which I meant to refer to those psychological factors which contribute to the causes of war. I see from the reaction of Morgenthau and Tillich that the title was unwisely chosen and that is why I have changed it to "War Within Man." But it was probably not only the bad choice of a title which led to the misunderstanding. I speak of destructiveness in its various forms and particularly in the form of necrophilia, as a

factor causing war. It would have been better to say *making war possible*. This is precisely what I mean: certain human drives, fears, hates and suspicions are necessary to make war possible. If all men loved life, had reverence for life, were independent and critical, the human basis for war would be lacking, just as an all destructive war could not be conducted without destructive weapons. I believe that these psychological factors must be studied and that they vary in degree and quality in each particular situation. Yet they have always existed and hence can be counted on whenever economic and political conditions lead to wars. My concern is that the human factor remains a significant one among the conditions which make war possible even if human destructiveness is by no means "the cause" of war.

While I feel pretty close to the position of H. J. Morgenthau and P. Tillich, even when they seem to feel distant to mine, I cannot say the same about Dr. Roy W. Menninger's commentary. I am sorry that it ascribes to me a position which I explicitly did not take in the paper. Dr. Menninger says that my paper leads to the "uncomfortable conclusion that there are in fact two species of people, the good and the bad, those for life and those against." In contrast to this I wrote in the paper: "These pure forms (of necrophilia and biophilia) are of course rare. The pure necrophile is insane; the pure biophile is saintly. Most people are a particular blend between the necrophilous and biophilous orientations and what matters is which of the two trends is dominant." In another point too Dr. Menninger ascribes views to me which are contrary to what I wrote. He is quite right in saying: "we are accustomed to seeing human aggressivity manifest itself in a virtual spectrum of behaviors." But I did not doubt this. On the contrary I wrote, "the following pages are devoted to the detailed examination of the most intense and fundamental type of destructiveness, the one rooted in the love of death: necrophilous hostility. There are other sources of destructiveness which I shall not deal with in these pages but which I want to mention at least." Another point in Dr. Menninger's commentary is even further away from what I wrote. Dr. Menninger argues that "the implication emerges that since destruction leads to death, destruction is therefore equivalent to death" . . . "to presume simply that death equals badness is

to create an ethic which confuses and distracts a logical inquiry." This is indeed true. In fact, to assume that "death equates badness" is in my opinioh simple nonsense. What puzzles me is why Dr. Menninger assumes I wrote such nonsense. I thought I had made it clear that I speak of an orientation which loves to destroy and which is attracted by death and decay. How can this be understood as meaning that death, the fate common to all men, is bad. Or how could it be understood to mean that to die for the defense of one's family or one's country is love of death when I wrote very explicitly that "hostility as a response to a threat to one's life, dignity, property, etc." is fundamentally different from what I describe as necrophilous orientation. I am afraid that I did not succeed in conveying my idea to Dr. Menninger; if I had he certainly would not have confused death with the wish to destroy, nor absence of necrophilia with absence of conflict.

Professor Sorokin raises very interesting questions the answers to which, I believe, lead us back to the questions raised by H. J. Morgenthau and P. Tillich. Why are graver forms of murder so much more frequent among kings and absolute rulers than among those whom they ruled? Certainly, the reason is not likely to be that they were more necrophilous but that the stakes for which they fought were very high and murder in many cases the only way of getting the throne. Again I agree that the theory of necrophilia does not explain why the twentieth century is so much more murderous than the preceding twenty-five centuries. The reason seems to lie in the fact that modern weapons are so much more destructive and this is a result of the progress of science and technique and not of necrophilia. Again I must repeat that it had not been my intention to explain all aggressive acts as a result of necrophilia but to describe necrophilia as one of the different kinds of psychic motivations resulting in destructive acts. Finally, one more remark. I am puzzled why Professor Sorokin thinks that men like St. Francis of Assisi or the Buddha would "have to be put rather in the class of the necrophiliacs." They were men of the greatest compassion and reverence for life, and their teaching that salvation is to be attained by overcoming the greedy attachment to life, has nothing to do with satisfaction in death and destruction.

I appreciate very much Jerome Frank's comments. There is

no problem of misunderstanding and hence of unnecessary argument but there is some difference of opinion. He raises two very relevant questions. One with regard to my statement that our contemporary industrial society tends to create necrophilia because of its bureaucratic character, which tends to transform men into things. He rightly says that no people have been as sensitive to the welfare of others as we are. This is true, but only with a qualification, that the contrary is true too. The murder of many millions of innocent civilians by the Nazis, the killing of hundreds of thousands of civilians in the air raids on Hamburg, Dresden, Tokyo, Hiroshima and Nagasaki has not aroused the sensitivities of vast numbers of people. Could one Dreyfus case—in our time, produce anything like the indignation and sympathy which the Dreyfus case aroused in the whole Western World over sixty years ago? Perhaps this contradiction can be explained by the fact that we live still in the tradition of political and social progress which swept the Western World since the end of the last century and at the same time we are already the captives of a new, dehumanizing, totally alienated society which is just at the beginning of its development.

Another form which Jerome Frank mentions is the fact that we may have reached a point where "life becomes so comfortable that it is boring." This is close to what I had in mind in writing about the necrophilic traits in modern society. When life ceases to be interesting and stimulating then there is a propensity to seek destruction as a form of transcending this unbearable boredom. I hope that empirical studies like the one I suggested can help to clarify these problems.

Finally I appreciate the fact that Jerome Frank has mentioned a point which I had omitted. It is indeed true that human behavior depends largely on the power of group standards and that the majority of people could behave like devils or like saints, depending on what the group standards are. This statement implies that the socioeconomic and political structure of a society and the resulting choice of their respective elites is of decisive importance for the formulation of individual behavior. My analysis of necrophilia meant only to describe one type of human orientation which is actually one form of severe pathology which can be very impor-

tant historically when circumstances make it possible for this type to gain power. (The best known example yet is that of Hitler.)

To read Thomas Merton's comments was deeply satisfactory. First of all because he expresses with clarity and courage many truths which need to be said. Beyond this I am always happy to find that Thomas Merton reacts with a spirit of true charity to what he reads. Not only that he does not distort things and ignore others which have been said. He tries to transcend the *words* of the author and to understand what he means or even what he *might* mean if he were fully aware of the consequences of his own ideas. Much as we differ in our religious concepts, I feel that more important than conceptualization (even though I do not mean to say that it does not matter) is the experience of that which can not be verbalized. Thomas Merton is a true religious humanist who seeks understanding and not arguments because he can see man behind his thoughts. I want to stress briefly how much I agree with Thomas Merton's emphasis on "the overwhelming and almost totally neglected importance of exploring this spiritual unconscious of man." I believe that any real change in man depends on this discovery of one's self and of exploring the depths of what he calls one's "spiritual unconscious."

I am glad that Thomas Merton discussed my concept of abundance and scarcity. I actually refer to it not only in a material but also in a psychic sense. But I believe, like him, that material abundance can be a curse instead of a blessing when it is transformed from a means for a dignified life to an end in itself. When man makes an idol of consumption, he betrays life; he betrays himself.

Let me conclude with a reference to Thomas Merton's statement toward the end of his commentary. I too find hope in the fact that man is not alone. The humanism expressed in Thomas Merton's comment is a greeting from man to man, a greeting beyond the barriers of separating thoughts, it is an affirmation of the humanity in which we all share.

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